

SPECIAL WILLIAM MORRIS EXHIBITION
NEWSLETTER

Editor: Connie Masters

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

I am very happy to be your new Chairman and look forward to working with all of you.

As I said at my first Executive meeting last week, "change for change's sake is negative" but each new chairman brings something of herself to the job, good and bad, through trial and error. There is a new approach because of a different personality or background and new goals and new priorities. Bear with me until I get my bearings. I need your support. Come to me or your day captain with your problems and ideas.

A new broom does not sweep clean. It finds and uses all the very good bits that were left tucked under the carpet.

Elizabeth Chish-Graham.

William Morris Needs You!

WANTED: five or six Grangers for Friday evening June 25 & July 2.

For the first time, The Grange is involved with the Gallery in a special exhibition - The Earthly Paradise, Arts and Crafts by William Morris and His Circle from Canadian Collections. June 25 to September 6, 1993.

The Grange Library, with its William Morris wallpaper, and J. Moyr Smith fireplace tiles, is expected to be of special interest to exhibition visitors, so we hope that the house can be open on the two Friday evenings from 4:00 to 9:00 pm. Even if you can give only two hours, it will be much appreciated. A list will be posted on the bulletin board in the staff sitting room for volunteers to indicate when they can come in.

For the benefit of those who may feel in need of a William Morris refresher course, Avril Stringer, Grange Research Chairman, has prepared extensive notes on both Morris and Moyr Smith, which are on the volunteer shelf in The Grange Library, and excerpts are included in this newsletter. There are also two new books on Morris in the Library.

William Morris

The reproduction William Morris wallpaper in The Grange library is VINE, first produced 1873

The first wallpapers produced by Morris's company were Daisy, Trellis and Fruit, which date from 1864. These were the forerunners of "seventy patterns for wallpapers, chintzes, and woven cloths made in the following thirty years." (William Morris Designer, R. Watkinson, 1967).

Morris's original ambition, when he went to Oxford in 1851/2, was to become a clergyman. After a trip to France, Morris and Edward Burne-Jones (see Cast of Characters) decided to devote themselves to art. They had been particularly impressed with an exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite painting and by the Gothic churches. Following their university years, Morris joined the firm of George Edward Street, an architect, and Burne-Jones became a pupil of Rossetti.

Dissatisfaction with contemporary design, particularly that shown in the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace, London, prompted William Morris to design his own furniture, and to found THE FIRM.

The International Exhibition of 1862, was the beginning of the Firm's success when they sold 150 worth of goods. The Firm's reputation was also greatly enhanced in the 1860s with the commission to decorate the Armoury and Tapestry rooms at St. James's Palace in London.

At first the Firm's main medium was stained glass. Later Morris experimented with textiles. Not satisfied with that produced when his designs were contracted out to a commercial weaver, Morris investigated medieval methods of dyeing. He then took a loom, together with weavers, from France to England. In this way Morris was able to produce textiles to his standards and even carpets.

William Morris was always aware that his designs could only be afforded by the very rich but he refused to compromise on quality.

The Grange library has a copy of Elizabeth Wilhide's book

WILLIAM MORRIS DECOR AND DESIGN (cat. No. 745.4492)

This is an excellent book with beautiful pictures. It also lists the current manufacturers and suppliers of William Morris designed goods. Avril Stringer suggests you browse through this book.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

William Morris - (1834-1896) British craftsman and poet, born and died near London. Educated at Marlborough and Oxford, he associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, then specialized in the revival of handicrafts and the art of house decoration and furnishings. In 1883, he joined the Social Democratic Federation, and then organized the Socialist League. In 1890, he set up the Kilmscott Press, issuing his own works and reprints of classics.

Burne-Jones, Sir Edward Coley. 1st Baronet
(1833-1898) British painter and designer, born in Birmingham. He studied at Oxford, where he met William Morris, and through the encouragement of Rossetti, relinquished the church for art. His later oils inspired by the early Italian Renaissance, are characterized by a romantic and contrived Mannerism. His subjects (were) drawn from the Arthurian romances and Greek myths. He also designed stained glass and tapestries, and illustrated several books for William Morris.

Rossetti, Dante Gabriel (1828-1882)
British poet and painter, born in London. He trained at the Royal Academy in London, and c.1850 helped to form the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which aimed to return to pre-Renaissance art forms involving vivid colour and detail. His early work was on religious themes, his later manner became more secular and ornate in style.

Morris, Jane Burden - married William Morris 1859
- subject of paintings by Morris and Rossetti
- embroidered many of the tapestries and hangings designed by William Morris
- two daughters

Morris, May - younger daughter - born 1862
- talented embroiderer and designer

Morris, Jenny - elder daughter - born 1861
 - diagnosed as epileptic 1876

Burne-Jones, Georgina Macdonald
 - wife of Sir Edward
 - also embroidered William Morris designs

The Arts and Crafts Movement

A predominantly English architecture, art and applied arts movement during the second half of the 19th century, which advocated the renewed use of handicraft and simple decoration in reaction to industrial machinery and contemporary aesthetic eclecticism. The movement centred on William Morris, whose Red House (1859) by the architect Philip Webb is a good example of the style.

THE CAMBRIDGE ENCYCLOPEDIA, Cambridge University Press 1990.

Excerpt from William Morris Designer - Gerald H. Crow.
The Special Winter Number of the Studio Ed: C.G. Holme 1934

Success is altogether too small a word to use in connexion with William Morris; his life is to be measured in terms, not of recognition or reward, but fruitfulness. How fruitful his life was in full sum, time must show. It was a tree almost of too many branches, and there is winter with most of them; but of its stature and vitality the living witness of his fellows makes no doubt.

Twice did Morris describe himself in terms since famous. Joining the Democratic Federation, he inscribed his card of membership "William Morris - Designer." Later, arrested after a police-court disturbance, he countered the magistrate's interrogation, "I am an artist and literary man, pretty well known, I think, throughout Europe." He was contemptuous of the bench. Nevertheless, men whose stuff is greatness are perpetually bound over to come up for judgment when called upon, before however contemptible a tribunal; and in their centenary year they commonly are called upon. The generation summoning them is no less on trial than they; it must answer for its verdict.

The verdict of to-day is implicitly hostile to William Morris, however complimentary its centenary expression; just as his verdict upon his own day was quite explicitly hostile and his

expressions not at all complimentary. For we have travelled almost irrevocably far from everything he represented. In declaring himself born out of his due time, Morris is partly criticising his own temperament, partly the times themselves. There were in real fact aspects of Victorian England objectively different from Mediaeval or Saxon England; notably the unspectacular nature of greatness in it, its want of candour and simplicity, and the power of wealth acquired by men harbouring a view of the poor radically divergent from the mental attitude of earlier times. To these Morris added indifference to, and destruction of beauty - which was a reflection of his temperament - and the replacing of beauty by something mean, mechanical and commonplace, which was a fact. For Morris himself was temperamentally indifferent to certain kinds of beauty, and prized especially those whose antiquity contained a promise of future permanence - the beauties of nature and of buildings whose texture was the work of time. All ages have been indifferent to the beauty they destroyed, so enamoured were they of that with which they replaced it. But now, for the first time, men were destroying beauty and spending neither time, thought nor care upon anything but the business value of what replaced it.

Quite apart from the fact that there is no agreement as to what beauty is or what things revealed it, two elements can be distinguished in man's regard for it. He is proud of it as the expression of his power, and he treasures it as the solace of his infirmity. In the first case, his power is not diminished by its loss, for he can create or acquire it anew, according to the nature of his power. But, with the second, its destruction severs the very roots of his strength and undermines the foundations of his security. To Morris, from the first, it appeared distinctly as solace. Its creation was not a source of pride, but a symptom of happiness, a proof that a certain external pressure was removed and that a man was free to exercise his own choice and his own fancy.


LIBRARY TILES

The decorative fireplace tiles in The Grange library were designed by J. Moyr Smith and manufactured by Minton.

J. Moyr Smith, as you will see from Avril's research, designed several different series of tiles. What we have, of course, is the Shakespeare series.

These tiles were quite common in the 1880s when they were made but now are quite rare, especially a full fireplace like ours.

These tiles should be considered part of the "Aesthetic Movement". This movement..."attempted to bridge the gap between ordinary people and the exclusive followers of the Arts & Crafts Movement". (The Decorated Tile - An Illustrated History of English Tilemaking J. & B. Austwick, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981 - page 91).



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Art Gallery of Ontario

Tiles produced by William Morris and his followers were mostly hand-painted and consequently expensive. The Minton factory was a pioneer in the mass production of decorative tiles. "It was the decoration that was popular, not the technique. The majority of people could not have cared less how the tile was made, they liked the design, and they bought it." (ibid. page 91)

The most popular tiles were decorated by the encaustic method (see below)

"encuastic" a method of painting used by the Ancients in which coloured waxes were applied to the surface and the colour was then fixed by heat.

"encaustic tile" a tile decorated with inlays of coloured clay and then fired.

(Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary 1988 - Canadian Edition)

The book mentioned The Decorated Tile is in The Grange library (Catalogue No. 738.6) and is well worth looking at.

DECORATED TILES - General information

The use of tiles goes back to ancient Egypt - 3,000 to 4,000 B.C.

Decorative tiles such as those at The Grange date from the early 19th century.

The first use of tiles was on the floor both in ancient times and in the 19th century. In the 19th century, however, with the improved sanitary conditions and new laws regarding sanitation, tiles came to be used on walls, etc. - on walls of bathrooms both public and private, on hospital and railway station floors and walls. They were waterproof and easy to clean. For use on walls a lighter weight of tile was needed and Minton was one of the pioneers in producing them.

Every Country in Europe and North & South America had its tile factories.

Early tiles showed Spanish influence with geometric patterns. Later Chinese methods of decoration were adopted, in blue and white which became the characterstic Delft tiles.

VOICE MAIL AT THE GRANGE

General Grange extension is still 337 and rings on all floors.

Chairman's office extension is 338

Peggy's extension is 237.

If you need to retrieve a message on voice mail - see instructions by the telephones.

VOICE MAIL AT THE GRANGE

General Grange extension is still 337 and rings on all floors.
Chairman's office extension is 338
Peggy's extension is 237.

If you need to retrieve a message on voice mail :-

- 1) Lift receiver
 - 2) press 'message' button
 - 3) when asked 'mailbox' - dial 337+#
 - 4) when asked 'password' - dial 12345+#
- You will then receive all messages in the system for ext. 337.

Please note that you can only retrieve from the following phones:

Modern kitchen, library, Peggy's office in far corner. A black diamond appears by the 'message' button if there is a message in the voice mail box.

Any incoming personal calls should be directed to extension 337.
This also applies to phone calls received evenings or weekends.

If you need any clarification or even to practice retrieving a message, please contact Elizabeth or Peggy.

THE GRANGE RAFFLE

Winners of The Grange Raffle are as follows:

- 1st prize Peggy Eades - dinner for up to 22 in The Grange.
- 2nd prize Elizabeth O'Malley from Hamilton - "Anne" doll.
- 3rd prize Alex Tarnopolsky from Toronto - 2 tickets for luncheon/
lecture series.

REMINDER

Now that we have an urn outside the door to the Atrium, please check to see if the flowers need watering. One watering can only, as the urn leaks. Thanks.

